



Secure Commonwealth Panel

November 14, 2011 - Richmond

WELCOMING REMARKS AND PANEL INTRODUCTIONS

Secretary Terrie Suit, Chair of the Secure Commonwealth Panel, opened the meeting and asked for panel introductions.

Secretary Suit read a portion of the *Code of Virginia* § 2.2-233 regarding the panel's duties and responsibilities. "The Panel shall monitor and assess the implementation of statewide prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery initiatives and where necessary to review, evaluate, and make recommendations relating to the emergency preparedness of government at all levels in the Commonwealth. Additionally, the Panel shall facilitate cabinet-level coordination among the various agencies of state government related to emergency preparedness and shall facilitate private sector preparedness and communication. The Panel shall make quarterly reports to the Governor concerning the state's emergency preparedness, response, recovery, and prevention efforts."

Per Secretary Suit's email to the panel last week, the decision to dissolve the sub panel groups (except for the Health and Human Resources sub panel) is to focus on ad hoc, panel member led, initiatives to better enable strategic focus on specific areas of concern. If there is something you feel strongly about, we encourage you to lead the effort.

HOMELAND SECURITY GRANTS

Presentation by Secretary Suit. Please see corresponding PowerPoint.

NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION EVACUATION PLAN

Presentation by Virgil Gray. Please see corresponding PowerPoint.

A major criticism of the National Capital Region preparedness effort is lack of coordination. But last week the Office of Personnel Management moved closer to improvement by issuing changes to their evacuation plans that included: a commitment to evacuating the region before 4:00 a.m., setting a leave by time (this is not enforceable, but the idea will help with planning), and providing more information to help people be better prepared in the event of a man-made or natural disaster. This plan is constantly being updated and coordinated with local and state government and with the District of Washington and Maryland.

Virgil Gray ended his presentation by specifying this was a difficult region, but everything that can be done is being done.

A question was asked about the DC commuter rails and the confusion they experienced during the snowstorm. Mr. Gray acknowledged that he is working closely with the Washington Area Transit Authority and the Metro. The transit authority has been open to Virginia involvement.

NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION BEHAVIORAL AND SHELTERING IN PLACE INITIATIVES

Presented by Janet Clements. Please see corresponding PowerPoint and handouts.

NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION MEETINGS

Secretary Suit reported on the various meetings held in the National Capital Region.

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, known as COG, has helped develop regional solutions to such issues as the environment, affordable housing, growth and development, public health, child welfare, public safety, homeland security, and transportation. COG is an independent, nonprofit association comprised of elected officials from 21 local governments, members of the Maryland and Virginia state legislatures, and members of the U.S. Congress. We have no official role in the Metropolitan Council of Governors, but are allowed to participate.

On November 4, the COG had its annual Snow Core Group meeting to discuss the National Weather Service Annual Winter Weather / Snow Briefing. They also talked about the Office of Personnel Management's new policy updates, the snow plan, and snow conference call procedures.

EVACUATION OF WASHINGTON DC

Dave Waldman presented a paper on this new working group.

Mr. Waldman could not be with the panel today, but submits this paper for consideration. Secretary Suit encourages the panel to review and let her or Wendy Hoffman know if you want to serve on this group.

SEPTEMBER 11 ANNIVERSARY

Secretary Suit reported on the tenth anniversary of September 11.

The Governor and his Cabinet did a pretty good job of attending the ceremonies and events.

The distribution of intelligence during this time was problematic. Secretary Suit would like the concurrence of the panel to pursue this with Under Secretary Karen Wagner for Intelligence and Analysis at the Department of Homeland Security. Hearing no objections, panel agreed.

HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS REPORT

The panel was asked to review Virginia's Hurricane Preparedness Report and let us know if they have questions. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration predicted 10 hurricanes this year. With that kind of forecast, the Virginia Emergency Response Team worked on improving hurricane preparedness in the Commonwealth by revising and refreshing the Commonwealth of Virginia Emergency Operations Plan.

Secretary Suit let the panel know that reports are provided to the Governor on hurricane and winter preparedness. These reports are coordinated through the Homeland Security Working Group, which is comprised of state, federal, and private sector partners.

IRENE RECOVERY

Michael Cline spoke on Hurricane Irene Recovery.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) under the authority of section 408 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. §5174, and Title 44 of the Code Federal Regulations (CFR) may provide financial assistance and, if necessary, direct services to eligible individuals and households who, as a direct result of a major disaster, have necessary expenses and serious needs and are unable to meet such expenses or needs through other means.

There are three types of federal assistance: Individual Assistance, Public Assistance, and Small Business Administration low interest loans.

The public assistance designations were to 32 counties and 16 cities for Hurricane Irene. FEMA provides 75 percent of the eligible cost of rebuilding government infrastructure and buildings. The Commonwealth funds a portion, and the applicant is responsible for the remaining amount. Public Assistance grants cover work on: debris removal, emergency protective measures, road systems, etc. The Public Assistance program is open to state and local government agencies and certain private nonprofit organizations.

Residents and businesses affected by Hurricane Irene can now apply for low-interest disaster loans from the U.S. Small Business Administration. Loans up to \$200,000 are available to homeowners to repair or replace damaged or destroyed real estate. Homeowners and renters are eligible for loans up to \$40,000 to repair or replace damaged or destroyed personal property.

Businesses and non-profit organizations of any size may borrow up to \$2 million to repair or replace damaged or destroyed real estate, machinery and equipment, inventory, and other business assets.

Individual Assistance is a presidential decision and does not have a hard money threshold.

Virginia received a pre-landfall federal emergency declaration. This action allowed FEMA to provide supplies, equipment and other needed resources to state and local officials responding to Hurricane Irene.

TROPICAL STORM LEE RECOVERY

The remnants of Tropical Storm Lee brought heavy rains and flooding on Sept. 8-9 to Fairfax and Prince William Counties. Approximately 500 people were displaced from their homes in Prince William County. Individual Assistance was denied, but the U.S. Small Business Administration has made low-interest disaster loans available to individuals, renters and businesses to help them recover from Tropical Storm Lee.

Secretary Decker noted the tremendous job that the Virginia Department of Emergency Management has and continues to do in the wake of these disasters.

HAMPTON ROADS PREPAREDNESS

Presented by Jim Redick

Hampton Roads hurricane preparedness includes: (*) Working on alternate shelters by using faith based community centers to bolster the local shelter capability. (*) Keeping residents in the region if their house was destroyed in the disaster. (*) Using Urban Area Security Initiative funds to assist in the pet sheltering program. (*) Sheltering special needs. Metropolitan Medical Response System funds have helped with medical cots and other resources. Individuals should have the right to go to the shelter of their choice, which means all shelters need to be equipped for special needs.

There are about 100 committees in the Hampton Roads area that work on emergency preparedness initiatives. These groups are being reorganized and consolidated to cut down on meeting fatigue. Much of their focus include promoting critical infrastructure sectors, using the target capabilities to identify true gaps, consolidating training and exercise sessions, and developing a regional communications plan with attention on alternate communications (satellite phones).

Hampton Roads has been selected as a site for a Department of Homeland Security Regional Resiliency Assessment Program.

EARTHQUAKE

Michael Cline reported on the Mineral Earthquake.

Virginia experienced a 5.8 magnitude earthquake on August 23 in Louisa County – larger than the Giles County quake. Virginia has experienced 44 aftershocks over 2.0 magnitude. This was a different kind of disaster - it was hard to see the damage with most of it inside the house or in the crawl space. It slowed the process down. Louisa County had an excellent record of tracking the damages that Oklahoma is using for their recent earthquake.

FEMA has granted individual and business owners in Louisa County federal disaster assistance. The Governor appealed FEMA's initial decision to deny Virginia any assistance. It is a complex situation, some families will need to leave their homes while its being repaired. They could use FEMA's Housing Program for living assistance.

The state is now working with homeowners insurance companies to get the word out on earthquake insurance.

DISASTER RELIEF FUN

Michael Cline reported on this program developed by Governor McDonnell.

The Virginia Disaster Relief Fund is helping Virginians who were affected by severe weather and tornadoes that struck the Commonwealth in April. The Governor recently established this fund to collect donations from companies, non-profit organizations, volunteer

organizations, faith-based groups, and residents. Charitable organizations and faith-based groups can request resources from this fund for specific cases that will assist individuals to recover from the April severe weather.

Virginia has appealed the FEMA's denial of federal assistance for the April storms. However, even if federal assistance is ultimately approved, the Virginia Disaster Relief Fund will remain available to help fulfill unmet needs. Recovery from these storms will be a long, expensive process.

The state is looking to expand this program and institutionalize it.

Secretary Decker noted that it will be a challenge to keep the momentum going on collecting donations. We are asking corporations to keep the fund on their schedule of annual donations and requesting the legislators identify any sources of funding.

PRIVATE SECTOR UTILITIES/IRENE RECOVERY OPERATIONS

Secretary Suit met with power, cable, phone, and internet companies regarding response operations during Hurricane Irene and the Mineral Earthquake. Her objective was to open dialogue with them on lessons learned and suggestions on improving the Commonwealth's response to emergency situations. The response to the hurricane and earthquake, uncovered a disconnect with the power companies and telecommunications on identifying the nodes for the 911 systems to get back up and running immediately. This ad-hoc group was a good way to address these issues.

CAPITOL SECURITY WORKING GROUP

Brandon de Graaf will be sending an email detailing this group's initiatives.

GOVERNOR'S EXERCISE

Secretary Suit, with coordination from Virginia Department of Emergency Management, conducted a successful Governor's Tabletop Exercise this past October. Next year's exercise will be on recovery operations.

COMMONWEALTH INTEROPERABILITY UPDATE

Presented by Chris McIntosh. Please see corresponding PowerPoint.

CENTRAL VIRGINIA URBAN AREA SECURITY INITIATIVE

Anna McRay reported on this initiative.

The group's main objectives are improving sheltering with a focus towards pets and site enhancements such as being able to run generators.

A December tabletop exercise is scheduled to highlight traffic management plans.

The group is working with regional Metropolitan Medical Response Systems, health districts, and hospitals to enhance their mass fatalities plan.

Anna announced "Survivor Day" for Central Virginia which is scheduled for mid-January to improve citizen preparedness.

CLOSING

Secretary Suit requested the panel email her or Wendy Hoffman on any ideas/items the panel wants to get involved in or lead.

Next meeting is on June 12.

Secretary Suit adjourned the meeting.